

# SECURITY AND THE CROSS

By

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An article in Christianity Today revealed that author Jim McKeever and his Omega Publishing Company budgeted \$500,000 for a two-month advertising blitz for three books which warn of a coming seven-year tribulation. The object of one of the books is to tell Christians how to prepare to survive nuclear war, famine, and earthquakes.

In spite of the fact that the tribulation of which scripture speaks took place during the siege of Jerusalem, 69-70 AD, the publishers are assured that Christians are so scared of the future that they will buy these books to find out how to survive.

The quest for security is big business in our day. Books and magazines are filled with advice on how to secure oneself against inflation, unemployment, shortages of fuel, food and energy, against foreign invasion, tax auditing, and about everything except judgment.

We should not be surprised to see the world turning to material things for its security, but the shocking fact is that most of the encouragement for the hoarding of goods and stockpiling for survival seems to be coming from the religious sector of the nation.

Modern religious man sees God as having given us a static system. Security is seen as fitting into that system, with a number of back-up systems, in case the first system fails. It means laying up treasures on earth as a guarantee against material loss.

More and more people seek security in government jobs because government is the biggest business, with the best insurance, best pension, etc. Security is sought at the hands of temporal, fallible, and insecure pagan agencies. Yet history proves that no government has any guarantee of security. The celebrated 52 hostages had secure positions with all the fringe benefits, but they fell victim to rebels, and all the power of a mighty government could not protect them.

The fact is, this world is not secure and is not a secure place in which to live. James said that life is like a vapor, unpredictable and temporary. The Rich Man in the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of Luke, who stockpiled his grain in bigger and bigger barns, is called a fool because his life was taken just when he had finished making everything secure. "So is he that lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21).

**SELF-DENIAL.** Those who seek to secure themselves in this world will be disappointed. "He that fins his life shall lose it; and he that loses his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 10:39).

The example is given by Christ, who "emptied himself." He denied himself and gave up his life in obedience to the Father for the salvation of His people with the assurance that He would take it up again for eternity. In following in His steps, the early Christians despised the kind of security offered by the Roman government and gladly gave up the security of homes and jobs in order that they might be faithful witnesses for Christ. They were not thinking in terms of survival but in terms of service to God, as Paul, who said, "I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself" (Acts 20:24).

To deny oneself is to deny the modern philosophy of looking out for Number One “because you owe it to yourself.” A Christian owes nothing to himself, rather he owes everything; to Christ who died for him. On the cross Christ paid the redemption price of his own life to save us. Therefore, the Christian owes his life to Christ. He is not his own, he is bought with a price. He is not to seek security in the world but the security that comes from God in the next world.

“AND TAKE UP HIS CROSS.” To take up the cross is to identify with Jesus Christ in His death. It was on the cross that the basic issue of our lives was decided. All the insecurity in the world is due to sin and man’s alienation from God because of his rebellion against Him. Being in sin man is “separate from Christ...having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12).

Not only is he insecure because of the lack of direction and purpose, plus the confusion of others around him, but he is filled with a “certain fearful expectation of judgment.” He can neither secure his life in this world nor find assurance for it in the next until the issue of sin is settled.

All of society has become so saturated with humanism, even in the churches, that it does not like to admit a sin problem. Social problems? Yes. Economic problems? Sure. Health problems? Well, of course. But sin? Who’s to judge? “I’m no worse than the rest. Nobody’s perfect.” So all kinds of answers flow except the serious admission that sin has ruined the human race and man continues to plunge deeper and deeper into its vortex.

Sin is a great evil because it is rebellion against the Creator. It is especially evil because it is antagonistic to the nature of God who gives life to the one sinning. The Creator’s own law requires that the sinner be put to death.

The grace of God is exercised in putting Christ to death instead. Christ was legally answerable because He came for that purpose, to bear man’s sin. “He shall bear their iniquities” (Isa. 53:11). Rather than a tragedy or miscarriage of Divine justice, as some view it, the cross was right and proper for Jesus. “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?” (Luke 24:26). This question was put by Jesus Himself after His resurrection.

Christ assumed the legal responsibility for sin for those He came to save. “The just for the unjust.” He obeyed the Father for them — He went to death for them. He suffered the ultimate consequences of sin — the forfeiture of life. (The punishment of the lost is not to live eternally in perpetual torture, as is commonly taught in evangelical circles, but to be put to death. The wages of sin is death.)

By the cross is meant not only the act of Christ’s substitutionary death but the total victory over death, which includes the resurrection —in other words, the Gospel.

We are secure in the gospel. In it we are saved from sin’s penalty, legally justified because Christ was officially punished in our place.

The security the cross guarantees is too often confused with the **feeling** of security. One feels insecure, so he goes looking for a different feeling. There are plenty of churches, anxious to fill their pews, that will devise a service filled with simulated joy and psychologically generated assurance to give one this **feeling**.

But, of course, the feeling is false. A man may feel his is perfectly secure behind locked doors and barred windows, but he may slip in the bathtub and drown! The Rich Fool of Luke 12 felt secure, but was already doomed.

Real security is based on objective fact, not feeling. The cross is where our security was legally obtained. When one enters into the cross-relationship — “He that believes and is baptized...” “baptized into Christ’s death” (Mark 16:16, Rom. 6:3) — he is under the terms of the instrument of security.

Security is not ours by our own righteousness, for then one would have to be as righteous as God. The greatest insecurity is known by those who think they will be saved if they are good enough! Only Christ was good enough to represent us to the Father. “He who knew no sin was made to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God IN HIM” (II Cor. 5:21).

In Him and His cross we are dead to the world of sin, but in Him and His resurrection we are raised to a new life.

In the cross is our ultimate salvation; that is, when we come to the accounting to God we are not condemned to death as sinners, because Christ was condemned on the cross for us, in our place. Therefore the cross is our security now, throughout life, and in eternity.

“AND FOLLOW ME.” The power of God is not static but dynamic. God is alive and working. Jesus said, “My Father works until now and I work.” He has not left things to be worked out by a “natural” process but is governing and guiding and providing.

Go ahead and give your coat away (Matt. 5:40). God will keep you warm. Go on and provide food and lodging for the stranger as the Good Samaritan did. God will replenish your supply. Pay your taxes. All the money belongs to God. “Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over” (Luke 6:38). The security is not in knowing exactly what God will provide or where He will lead us day by day, but in knowing that He will provide and that we are being led by Him.

To follow anyone else is not only foolish but dangerous, as none has permanence in the world. What scientists belied a few years ago is now proven false. Medical science changes continually. Religious movements come and go. But Christ is the changeless one. To follow Him is to follow the One Who has all power to see that we arrive at the destination He has purposed, the One Who died and rose again and now lives as King of Kings, and Lord of Lords and Who only has immortality (I Tim. 6:16).

There is one catch to the security found in the Cross. It must be first. That is, we must trust security in Christ more than any other promise of security. “Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:23).

There are clever ways people have of relying on the security of the cross and the security of the world at the same time. We will deny ourselves, take up the cross and follow Jesus; but first we must pay off the mortgage; but first we must get the children through college; but first we must labor for that promotion; but first we must see that there is plenty of good food, that the wardrobe is filled, that we have a new microwave and that all things for survival are neatly stored away. Obviously, there is nothing wrong with these things. What is wrong is that people seek them before they rely on the security of Jesus Christ and His cross and after getting them they continue to seek more of the security of the world, never getting to a point where they are ready to deny self and take up the cross and follow Jesus.

On the one hand are those who are telling us to stock food, fuel, arms and all manner of goods to insure survival in time of crisis. On the other hand we are being told to invest our time, money, and lives in rebuilding the economy, the government, the military, and society as a whole, in order to have security. We are advised on the right and the left to do everything we possibly can to secure ourselves from self-denial, from taking up the cross and following Jesus.

Only one security is essential — that we stand right in the eyes of God. Nothing matters so much as this, that we be cleansed of sin, and this is possible only through the cross.

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